

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Independent Living Committee Meeting Minutes**  
May 19, 2021

**Members Present**

Ted Chittenden  
Steve Tepper  
Brian Dulude  
Katie Gomez  
John McCann

**Members Absent**

Frank Vance

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

Bob Kresmer  
Amy Porterfield

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Ted Chittenden called the meeting to order at 9:00 am. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

**Approval of March 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Bob Kresmer motioned to approve the March 17, 2021 meeting minutes. Steve Tepper seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes was passed by unanimous voice vote.

**Disclosures**

**a. Community Service Request**

Ted Chittenden stated that his niece was a student at Northern Arizona University (NAU) and was seeking summer employment in her field. Ted Chittenden stated that he contacted Marc Ashton at the Foundation for Blind Children (FBC) and was told that that agency was not currently hiring. Mr. Chittenden stated he also contacted some of the members of the IL Committee, and SAAVI Services for the Blind indicated that they might have community service options for his niece.

## **b. Ted Chittenden's Reapplication to GCBVI**

Ted Chittenden stated he had applied for reappointment to the GCBVI, and the Office of Boards and Commissions had indicated that they would process several council applications at the same time for approval.

## **Strategic Plan Goals Discussion**

Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the status of the proposed funding increase for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program. Amy Porterfield stated the bill for increased funding of \$500,000 was introduced to the Legislature at the beginning of the Legislative season but that bill had lost traction. Ms. Porterfield stated the next step was to advocate with the Chairs of the House and Senate Appropriations committees on a campaign to inundate their inboxes with information regarding the bill. Amy Porterfield stated that although council members could not advocate on behalf of the council, individuals could advocate as consumer group or community members. Amy Porterfield stated the Governor had already drafted the budget, so the goal was to get the bill added to next year's budget. Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the end of the Legislative session. Amy Porterfield stated members of the Legislature would continue to work until they were finished. Bob Kresmer stated the information had been sent to John McCann for distribution to the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) members. John McCann stated he had distributed the information to AzCB members.

Ted Chittenden stated the current bill related to the Strategic Plan's goals that ILB funding is increased and services to older blind consumers is stable and sustained. Mr. Chittenden stated the other related goal was that under 55 ILB funding is established and sustained. Ted Chittenden stated that if the Governor approved of the additional ILB funding, the next goal would be to sustain that funding. Amy Porterfield stated that typically once funding was added to the budget, it would remain in the budget. She noted the additional funding had been removed from the budget previously due to the 2008 economic downturn. Bob Kresmer inquired whether Brian Dulude had heard anything about the potential increased funding through the Department of Economic Security (DES). Brian Dulude stated he had not heard any updates regarding the potential increased funding.

Ted Chittenden stated the next Strategic Plan goal was that ILB services to all populations are universally available statewide. Ted Chittenden stated that individuals in rural areas and Native American reservations often had limited ILB services and inquired how that goal could be accomplished. Bob Kresmer stated that council members had met with Rehabilitation Services

Administration (RSA) leadership who had indicated the agency was determining whether to hire more ILB staff or to allow vendors to provide more services to rural areas. Brian Dulude agreed and noted that he would like to hire an Orientation and Mobility (O&M) teacher and an Assistive Technology (AT) instructor. Dr. Dulude noted that he was able to hire a Purchasing Technician (PT) whose job would begin in June and who would be able to distribute AT equipment and process authorizations for services. Brian Dulude stated the ILB Program Manager position would be posted in June and that he was working to fill the Rehabilitation Technician (RT) position as well. Brian Dulude noted that the majority of ILB clients were in Pima and Maricopa counties and that most rural counties had ILB clients in the single digits. Brian Dulude stated that with the pandemic, ILB was able to provide more services virtually to individuals who would have previously had to wait to receive services. Amy Porterfield stated that SAAVI Services for the Blind provided services statewide and noted the organization was just beginning to travel to individuals. Amy Porterfield stated the challenge was that although providers could provide services to individuals in rural communities, if individuals were not aware of the available services, they could not request those services. Ted Chittenden inquired whether there was a way to obtain the number of individuals that required services in the rural areas or reservations. Bob Kresmer stated that Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) had a cooperative agreement with the Native American VR program and supported that program. Amy Porterfield stated the 121 tribal programs did not offer ILB services or blindness training but would connect individuals to VR for services. Ms. Porterfield stated that many individuals in those areas were reluctant to travel and preferred to receive services in their homes.

Ted Chittenden inquired how the IL Committee could assist with the efforts to increase services to rural areas. Bob Kresmer stated that in the past, the IL Committee developed Best Practices and a list of approved AT equipment that could be distributed to clients. Brian Dulude stated that rehabilitation teachers and the vendors would meet with clients and determine the appropriate AT equipment for ILB clients. Dr. Dulude noted that although there was currently a backlog of those requests, his goal was to send out all AT within 10 business days. Brian Dulude stated he did not want the ILB unit to have AT equipment sitting in inventory but preferred for clients to get the AT they needed. Bob Kresmer stated the IL Committee had developed the approved AT list so that clients could be provided AT equipment beyond the basic devices. Amy Porterfield agreed that it could be difficult to choose AT equipment off a list and that rehabilitation teachers might choose different AT based on the AT that was available. Katie Gomez suggested that the AT list include a variety of similar AT equipment to suit the needs of the client. Amy Porterfield stated that it could be useful to develop Best

Practices to streamline the processes. Ted Chittenden inquired how staff would determine which items would be included on an AT list. Brian Dulude stated the rehabilitation teachers often had certifications and experience that helped them to recommend the appropriate equipment for clients. He noted that Mississippi State also provided technical assistance and training to staff regarding AT and Best Practices. Ted Chittenden stated his understanding that the IL Committee would survey rehabilitation teachers and vendors regarding the items that were most used and include them on an AT list. Amy Porterfield agreed that ILB did not need to go off an AT list and store equipment unnecessarily. Ms. Porterfield suggested developing Best Practices and examining the service and equipment provision. Brian Dulude stated he would be willing to work on developing Best Practices with the assistance of rehabilitation teachers. Bob Kresmer suggested that some committee members work on that workgroup with Dr. Dulude. Amy Porterfield agreed and suggested that Ted Chittenden work with Brian Dulude in developing the workgroup. Ted Chittenden agreed and noted that would coincide with the committee's Strategic Plan goals.

Bob Kresmer inquired whether some AT equipment had been placed in inventory and had not been used. Brian Dulude stated that AT equipment had been purchased for 54 and under clients at one time and had not been utilized yet. Ted Chittenden inquired whether that equipment should be distributed or whether ILB unit should hold onto the equipment for when it would be needed. Brian Dulude stated the ILB unit would hold onto the equipment until it was needed.

### **Potential New Committee Goals Discussion**

This item was tabled.

### **Annual Report Discussion**

Ted Chittenden stated that he would be developing the IL Committee report for inclusion in the GCBVI Annual Report and would submit it to the Public Information Committee. Mr. Chittenden stated the report would cover the timeframe of July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. He noted that he would write the report from the time that he was the Chair of the committee and would likely submit the draft report to committee members for review.

### **Agenda and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the IL Committee was scheduled for August 17, 2021. Agenda items are as follows:

- ILB Workgroup Updates

### **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

### **Public Comment**

A call to the public was made with no response's forthcoming.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

Bob Kresmer motioned to adjourn the meeting. John McCann seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 am.